



United States
Office of Personnel Management

DIGEST OF SIGNIFICANT CLASSIFICATION DECISIONS AND OPINIONS

No. 12
September 1988
AR-100

Office of Merit Systems
Oversight & Effectiveness
December 1997, HRCD-4

[Main Menu](#) [Help Screen](#)

Note to Readers

The guidance in this issue is still applicable and useful in classifying positions in the Federal government. However, there may be references to names and addresses of organizations within the U.S. Office of Personnel Management that have changed, names of individuals no longer employed at the Office of Personnel Management, or documents such as the Federal Personnel Manual that no longer exist.

For the December 1997 HRCD-4 release, the Office of Classification Appeals and Fair Labor Standards Act Programs made minor, nonsubstantive edits to Digest issues 1 through 19. For example, acronyms and abbreviations were spelled out in many places, references to law and regulation were expanded, typographical errors were corrected, leading zeros were added to 3-digit series numbers, outdated prefaces have been deleted, and the issuance date were added to the header of each page. Because of the change from the original paper version to an electronic format, the page numbers in Digest issues 1 through 19 and other references, such as the General Schedule classification standards and Federal Wage System job grading standards, now available electronically may have changed. In issues 1 through 19, where there is a reference to a page, we either eliminated the page reference or updated the page number with the page number of the electronic version. Beginning with issue 20, pages references are to the electronic version only. Please note that pages numbers may change when a file is printed depending on the format and printer used.

The Office of Classification Appeals and Fair Labor Standards Act Programs is responsible for the content of the Digest. We be reached by telephone at 202-606-2990, by fax at 202-606-2663, or by email at ADOMSOE@OPM.GOV.

Digest issues are also available on the Office of Personnel Management's website and electronic bulletin board. The website address is <http://www.opm.gov> and the electronic bulletin board is OPM ONLINE. Using a modem, dial OPM ONLINE at 202-606-4800. Long distance telephone charges may apply.

Standard: N/A

Factor: N/A

Issue: Crediting "emergency" work

Identification of the Classification Issue

Attack Warning Officers had the responsibility to disseminate information instantly and decisively on reports of emergencies which could conceivably include enemy attacks as well as reports of other disaster conditions that were considered threatening to life or property. Attack Warning Officers were found by the Office of Personnel Management to be operating at the GS-11 level for, ostensibly, the preponderance of their time and at the GS-12 level on an irregular, nonrecurring, emergency basis. Normally, the grade of a position is not determined by work that is of an emergency, infrequent, incidental, or temporary nature.

Resolution

The Classification Appeals Office observed that the Attack Warning Officers' readiness to accomplish their mission must be constant. Indeed, they conducted daily tests to maintain both the systems and their readiness. It surely could not be said that their readiness to accomplish their most responsible and stressful duties was of an infrequent, incidental, or temporary nature. While many positions in many occupations occasionally require the performance of higher level duties that are not grade controlling, a true emergency would, in all likelihood, not be listed in a position description because of its unpredictable nature. However, there are certain occupations that exist for the purpose of dealing with emergencies, however infrequently occurring. For example, firefighters fight fires only on an emergency basis but this is the basic purpose of the position, requires materially higher qualifications, and is clearly identified in the position description as the preeminent major duty, irrespective of time spent actually fighting fires. Another example is presented in the Grade Evaluation Guide for Police and Security Guard positions. Grade level credit is provided for maintaining proficiency in specialized weapons and tactics for defending against and/or repelling terrorists. Proficiency is maintained and demonstrated in drills, simulations, and refresher training as a function of normal security patrol and protection duties. Thus, the focus is on readiness for potential emergencies and credit for maintaining that readiness. In the case of the Attack Warning Officers, the basic reason for the existence of the positions was to serve as Attack Warning Officers in the event of a true national emergency. Therefore, the readiness for dealing with specifically defined emergencies was a constant and integral feature of the position's requirements, like firefighter positions. Consequently, the Classification Appeals Office upgraded the positions from grade GS-11 to GS-12.

Standard: Agronomy Series, GS-0471
(February 1961)

Factor: N/A

Issue: Titling and selecting a classification standard
for the Research Agronomist specialization

Identification of the Classification Issue

This issue arose in an Office of Personnel Management region's consideration of a classification appeal. The GS-12 position involved the development and evaluation of application methodology and equipment for weed control and plant regulation. The agency had avoided the "Research Agronomist" title, expressing concern that use of the Research Grade Evaluation Guide would be mandated when they felt it would not be appropriate. The Office of Personnel Management had to determine whether the position should be titled "Research Agronomist," and, if so, the appropriate standard for grade determination.

Resolution

The Office of Personnel Management region found the position to be specifically covered by the Research Agronomist specialization as discussed in the GS-0471 Agronomy Series standard. Concerning this specialization, the standard states, ". . . there are some areas of research where the work tends to specialize along particular lines that do not necessarily follow the two general approaches indicated. This would include . . . the development, use and specific application of weed controls and plant regulators; etc." Therefore, a title of "Research Agronomist" was found to be appropriate for the position.

The Office of Personnel Management agreed with the agency that use of the Research Grade Evaluation Guide was inappropriate, notwithstanding the research title. The Office of Personnel Management determined that the assignment in the appealed position clearly fell in the area of development, test, and evaluation. The Research Grade Evaluation Guide is focused on the basic and applied research end of the spectrum of research and development activities. Therefore, it was not appropriate for this position, which involved principally development functions.

The Equipment Development Grade Evaluation Guide crosses occupational lines to cover development work in professional engineering and physical science positions. Like research, development advances the state of the art, but it is further characterized by the creation of new or substantially improved end items in the form of equipment, systems, materials, processes, procedures, and techniques. The grading criteria in the Equipment Development Grade Evaluation Guide are broadly written (for coverage across professional engineering and physical science occupations) and are readily extrapolated to comparable development work in the biological sciences. Therefore, the Equipment Development Grade Evaluation Guide was determined to be the most appropriate standard for classifying the "Research Agronomist" position.

Applying the Equipment Development Grade Evaluation Guide, the Office of Personnel Management evaluated all four factors at Degree C for 15 points and a grade of GS-12. Thus, only the title was changed.

Standard: Supervisory Grade-Evaluation Guide,
Part II

Factor: Comprehensive Evaluation

Issue: Application of alignment principle GS-0460

This article was deleted in August 1994 because of the issuance of the General Schedule Supervisory Guide (TS-123, dated April 1993), which superseded the Supervisory Grade-Evaluation Guide, issued in January 1976 (TS-23) and the Draft Grade Evaluation Guide for White Collar Supervisors, issued in 1991.

Standard: Motor Vehicle Operator, WG-5703
(November 1968)

Factor: Skills and Knowledge: Responsibility

Issue: Vehicle characteristics vs. WG-6 skills,
knowledges, and responsibility

**This article was deleted in March 1992
because of the issuance of a new standard
for the WG-5703 series.**

Standard: Job Grading Standard for Supervisors (WS)
(August 1982)

Factor: Factor I, Nature of Supervisory
Responsibility

Issue: Full Foreman vs. limited: Impact of Shop
Planner and of higher supervisors

Identification of the Classification Issue

This issue arose during the adjudication of an appeal by an Office of Personnel Management region. The appellant was one of five unit supervisors. The appellant supervised 14 full-time employees and engaged in various maintenance and repair activities. He and the four other unit supervisors performed similar supervisory work; the organization was supervised by a General Engineer; day-to-day supervision was performed by an Assistant Chief of the Engineering Section. In addition, a Shop Planner (Maintenance Scheduler) planned and coordinated the activities of all craftsmen through the work order system.

The agency had determined the Nature of Supervisory Responsibility was that of a limited Foreman. This was based on the presence of the General Engineer and Assistant Chief, but mostly because of the work of the Shop Planner. The appellant requested that he be credited with full Foreman responsibility.

Resolution

The Office of Personnel Management found that the day-to-day supervision of the Assistant Chief was "general" rather than close. Since the Assistant Chief was responsible for second level supervision of five units, sound management practice dictated that he could not be closely involved in directly supervising the day-to-day work within each work unit.

The Region also decided that the duties of the Shop Planner did not curtail the Foreman's responsibility for supervising and directing work operations in his shop. The Shop Planner functioned in a staff capacity and had primary responsibility for coordinating and monitoring activities through the work order system. Thus, his responsibility for the planning and scheduling systems and procedures assisted management in the overall control and management of the operations.

The Foreman, on the other hand, had complete responsibility for actually assigning work to shop personnel, ordering materials, and seeing that work was completed efficiently and effectively. In short, the Shop Planner was the focal point of the work order system whereas the Shop Foreman handled work orders concerning his own shop. Thus, the coordination of the work order system had no limiting effect on the direct supervision of shop employees by the Shop Foreman.

It was decided that the appellant's supervisory responsibility was that of a full Foreman, not limited. As a result, the job was reclassified one grade higher.

Standard: Job Grading Standard for Supervisors (WS)
(August 1982)

Factor: Factor I, Nature of Supervisory
Responsibility

Issue: Whether a job should be classified as
Foreman or as General Foreman (but one or
more grades less than that shown by the
General Foreman grading table)

Identification of the Classification Issue

This issue arose in an Office of Personnel Management region's consideration of a classification appeal. the appeal involved a Cook Foreman who supervised two sections through five subordinate supervisors. His job exceeded Foreman criteria under Factor I of the Job Grading standard for Supervisors. However, it fell short of General Foreman criteria. Page 13 of the standard shows that when a General Foreman job has less than the full range of General Foreman responsibility, it should be classified as General Foreman but one or more grades below that shown by the General Foreman grading table. Thus, the issue was whether the job should be classified as Foreman, or as General Foreman but one or more grades less than that shown by the grading table.

Resolution

Page 3 of the standard shows that to decide whether a job should be evaluated at the Foreman or General Foreman level, one should select the range of supervisory responsibility that better fits the job overall.

The appellant's job met Foreman criteria in most respects. Nonetheless, it exceeded those criteria in a few respects, most notably in that it involved supervision of subordinate supervisors. However, pages 3 and 4 of the standard indicate that a job may be properly classified as Foreman even if it involve supervision of such supervisors.

The job met General Foreman criteria in some respects. However, on balance it fell substantially short of the General Foreman criteria for a number of reasons, including the following:

1. All work directed by the appellant was covered by just two very closely related occupations: cooking and food service working. For this reason among others, he did not direct as wide a variety of work operations or functions as do General Foremen.
2. He directed two units, not several as do General Foremen.
3. He planned and schedule work assignments on a long-range basis, as do General Foremen. However, these plans and schedules fell short of General Foreman criteria in that they were not for accomplishment by several units. Also, they were simple and standardized, being nearly identical to the appellant's previous long-range plans and schedules.

4. The appellant did not, to the extent typical of General Foremen, plan work assignments considering trades or other occupations involved.
5. He did not serve as a management representative at formal hearings, meetings, and negotiations involving labor-management relations on a regular and recurring basis.
6. Pages 2 and 3 of the standard describe assumptions made in writing the standard. These pages indicate that General Foremen typically supervise a number of different work operations or functions, direct a number of different kinds of skills and occupations, coordinate and control fairly varied and dispersed work operations, and encounter frequent changes in the variety, volume, or kind of work supervised, and in the deadlines for completing work. The appellant's job did not meet these conditions.

Based on the above analysis, the Office of Personnel Management concluded that the appellant's job over-all matched the Foreman range of responsibility better than the General Foreman range. It was, therefore, evaluated at the Foreman level.